

SOCCER

GFA I'm proud of you!

The at half-strength GFA side, which met a high-class amateur side, Wycombe Wanderers, on Saturday at Victoria Stadium, covered themselves in glory when holding the visitors to a 2—2 draw.

Suspensions, injuries, and other players who were just not willing to turn out, had robbed our side of many 'stars', but the players who did take the field fought with tremendous spirit, and especially in the first-half served up some fine soccer as well.

Everyone at the ground, I feel sure, felt that our lads were on to a thrashing, but this proved very far from reality. Combined Services, who had beaten Wanderers 2-1 before coming here a fortnight ago, were drilled in the best way to beat GFA, in the air, and this is where Wycombe differed. They very much played our style, keeping the ball on the deck and using the short-pass, so GFA were not faced with the same problems.

The local selection also had the boost of an early goal. A clever move had Serra passing to Cortes, and although his shot was blocked by a defender, the ball rebounded back to him, and this time he rifled into the corner of the net. Cortes very nearly completed a double minutes later his shot going into the side-netting. The chance was laid on from a stupendous move, which started in mid-field, and had the spectators warming to the local side.

In the 17th min. they did go two up. A corner was awarded in their favour which I believe

should have been a goal-kick, and from it Serra soared to head home a good goal. Cortes, who was giving Fuschillo a worrying time, had a great opportunity to add another goal this time though shooting high.

Wanderers' build-up in mid-field was very competent but they lacked finish. Anthony had a good effort sailing narrowly over, and a header from Hutchinson was scrambled away by Wink for a corner. A couple of successive attempts were blocked, Searle getting one through but Wink saving well. Pritchard was just off the mark with a header, after a free-kick.

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At half-time the score was 2—0, the visitors though pressing hard on resumption and straining GFA's defensive capacities to full stretch. Shots from Powell and Searle went near, and Wink saved twice from Hutchinson. The goalie however failed to cut out a high centre, and there was Pritchard to coolly head in. In the 20th min. a defensive mix-up allowed Hutchinson to equalise, and GFA looked in trouble.

The fought out of it however, and could have scored the decisive goal, Aguilera, substitute for Serra, sent Figueras away with a through ball. His Manchester Utd team-mate worked the ball well, his drive though inches wide.

Delaney and Hardcastle, two of the England amateur internationals left on the bench, were brought in for Baker and Searle respectively, but there were no further goals. The latter is on Skermesdale's books and is here as a guest player. The one who impressed me most was inside-left Pritchard.

He was involved in an incident in the closing minutes which was unfortunately misinterpreted by some spectators. Wink went down clutching his face and some thought Pritchard had kicked it when in fact what had happened was that the ball had rebounded off his foot into the goalie's face as he attempted to clear.

There were no incidents of importance though, the match being sportingly played. Before the start the teams and officials lined up to be presented to the Minister for Education and Recreation who went round with the respective chairmen, Mr J. Reyes (GFA) and Mr J. Smethurst (WW).

The GFA selection which eventually lined-up was: Wink, Moreno, Federico, A. Martinez, Johnson, Fa, Figueras, Jurado, Asquez, Serra (Aguilera), and Cortes.

They all gave 100 per cent effort, and I for one am proud of their performance!